



Dakota County Post Service Officer's Association  
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May 2011 Newsletter

## **COUNTY VETERAN SERVICE OFFICER ASSOCIATION MEETING**

**Date:** May 31<sup>st</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> Tuesday  
**Time:** 5:00 p.m.  
**Place:** Hastings Veterans Home  
1200 East 18<sup>th</sup> Street, Hastings  
**Host:** West St. Paul American Legion

This is a tremendous opportunity to enjoy an old fashion grill fest, meet residents, learn about the services provided by the Minnesota Veterans Home and meet your fellow veterans and your local service officers.

## **MEET & GREET WITH DAKOTA COUNTY VETERAN SERVICES STAFF**

**Date:** May 19<sup>th</sup>, Thursday  
**Time:** 7:00 pm  
**Place:** Nelson-Lucking American Legion Post  
50 Sibley Street, Hastings  
**Time:** 7:00 pm-8:00 p.m.

## **NEW STAFF AT DAKOTA COUNTY VETERAN SERVICE OFFICE**

Lisa Thomas was appointed as the Director of Dakota County Veterans Services. Lisa worked for Dakota County Social Services for 10 years and is currently serving in the Air Force Reserve.

Tim Mozey has been hired as a Senior Veteran Service Officer. Tim worked for Dakota County Communications for 10 years and is retired from the Minnesota Army National Guard.

Staff at Dakota County Veteran Services provides advice and assistance for veterans or their families filing claims for state and/or federal benefits, social security supplement income benefits, and other public and private programs. Our mission is to act as an advocate and provide resources to the veterans of Dakota County, their families and survivors by assisting them in getting the benefits they are entitled to under the law.

For questions, please contact the Dakota County Veterans Service office at 651-554-5601 from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Meetings with a Veteran Service Officer are by appointment only. If you walk in we may not be available to immediately assist you as appointments are highly encouraged!

The main office is in West St. Paul and we have a Senior Veteran Service Officer, Mary Truax, in Apple Valley (M-Thu) and in Hastings on Fridays only. Please call (651) 554-5601 to schedule an appointment at any of these locations.

**EDUCATION FAIR**  
**June 14th**  
**5:00-6:30 p.m.**  
**MN Higher Education Veterans Program**  
**Dakota County Technical College**  
**Rosemount, MN**

Kathy Bachman, Regional Coordinator, Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs and Nicole Meulemans, Dakota County Technical College, Director of Student Life will conduct a seminar on admission procedures, veterans' education benefits and the Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Collegiate program. Military, veterans, family members, guidance counselors, and community members are welcome to attend. Questions can be directed to Nicole at [nicole.meulemans@dctc.edu](mailto:nicole.meulemans@dctc.edu) or 651-423-8403.

**PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS**

Veterans with a 70% or over disability rating are reminded that new applications must be submitted by July 1st, 2010. The St. Paul VA Regional Office will mail Annual Summary of Benefits letters to veterans during the month of May. These letters are used to apply for state or local benefits in which verification of VA benefits is required.

If a veteran does not receive a letter by June, contact the VA Regional Office, your power of attorney, or this office.

**MEMORIAL DAY - ITS MEANING AND OBSERVATION**



Each year, Memorial Day is pretty much the same for most Americans - parties, barbecues, informal get-togethers with the family, scouring newspaper ads for all the sale prices, or even staying home and doing chores on that ever-neglected to-do list, or just being lazy, and enjoying the time off work. A lot of Americans overlook the true meaning of Memorial Day in all the excitement.

It is difficult to prove the exact origins of Memorial Day, however, the day was officially proclaimed in 1868, by General John Logan, who was then the commander of the Grand Army of the Republic. The day was first observed on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of May in 1868. To observe the day, citizens used flowers to decorate the graves of all soldiers, both Union and Confederate, at Arlington National Cemetery. Today, Memorial Day is still observed on the last Monday in the month of May each year, though some lawmakers are trying to pass a resolution to move the day back to May 30, in keeping with the date of the first Memorial Day. Though it is a widely-held belief that Memorial Day is to honor everyone that has passed away, whether military or civilian, the true purpose of Memorial Day is to honor all military service members that have given their lives in service to their country.

## **BRONZE STAR MARKERS**

The Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs offers Bronze Stars to mark the grave site of any veteran buried in the state, where permitted.

To obtain your Bronze Star Marker, please contact the Dakota County Veteran Service Office at 651-554-5601.

## **COMMUNITY TOWN HALL MEETINGS**

Lisa Thomas, Dakota County Veteran Service Director, would like to become friendly with the local military community, and with veterans, and their families. If your organization would like to meet Lisa and have her attend one of your meetings, please email her at [lisa.thomas@co.dakota.mn.us](mailto:lisa.thomas@co.dakota.mn.us) or contact her at 651-554-5631.

## **WALZ PARTICIPATES IN LAUNCH OF NATIONAL INITIATIVE TO SUPPORT MILITARY FAMILIES**

Congressman Walz joined First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden as they launched the National Initiative to Support Military Families at the White House.

"When a soldier serves our country, their family serves too," said Walz. "Making sure they have the support they have earned is the least we can do to show our appreciation for their sacrifice. The value they add to our communities through their experience and perspective is immeasurable."

The initiative aims to educate, challenge, and spark action from all sectors of our society — citizens, communities, businesses, non-profits, faith based institutions, philanthropic organizations, and government — to ensure military families have the support they have earned. In addition, it builds on the President's directive to establish a coordinated and comprehensive federal approach to supporting military families, and will work to reconnect military families with all communities.

## **OPERATION MILITARY KIDS FAMILY "MILITARY FAMILIES IN OUR BACKYARD" CAMP**

This is a three-day camp for military families with at least one child in grades K-12. Family camp is intended to help families communicate, cooperate, and have fun. This helps the children better understand what their service member is experiencing. Families will participate in challenges, learn new skills, and enjoy time together.

To register, go to [www.Operationmilitarykids.org](http://www.Operationmilitarykids.org), click "State Information" or contact Michele VanDyke at [mvandye@umn.edu](mailto:mvandye@umn.edu). Program fee: \$20.00 per family for weekend camps, \$10 per family for day camps. This nominal fee defrays the cost of OMK t-shirts, bags, or similar grant funder. Families will not incur other fees. \* Fee waived upon request – To request a fee waiver, you must email BEFORE registering. Contact [mvandye@umn.edu](mailto:mvandye@umn.edu) to receive a fee waiver.

## **VA SEXUAL TRAUMA PROGRAM UPDATE**

Approximately one in five women and one in a hundred men seen in VA medical facilities report that they experienced Military Sexual Trauma (MST); that is, sexual assault or repeated, threatening sexual harassment that occurred during military service. MST can affect veterans' physical and mental health many years afterwards.

VA offers a variety of services designed to assist veterans who have experienced MST. For example, treatment for physical and mental health conditions related to MST is available at every VA facility and is provided to veterans free of charge, regardless of service-connection status. Veterans may be able to receive this free MST related care even if they are not eligible for other VA care.

Every VA facility has an MST coordinator who serves as a point of contact for veterans and staff. It's important to remember that every VA employee has the power to help veterans recover from MST by responding sensitively to inquiries about MST, remaining knowledgeable about VA's MST-related services, and ensuring that information about veterans' MST status is kept confidential.

## **DEADLINE FOR STOP-LOSS PAYMENTS EXTENDED AGAIN**

Congress has again extended the deadline for former troops seeking retroactive stop-loss payments. The new application deadline is Oct. 21. The payment program compensates troops who had their military service involuntarily extended under stop-loss authority between Sept. 11, 2001, and Sept. 30, 2009.

Congress passed a law in 2009 to compensate the troops with retroactive bonuses of \$500 for every month served beyond their scheduled separation or retirement dates. This law requires service members to apply for the special pay. The average payout is about \$3,800. Lawmakers have repeatedly extended the application deadline in an effort to compensate as many eligible troops as possible.

## **MILITARY FAMILY RESOURCES**

<http://www.beyondtheyellowribbon.org/resources>

## **ON LINE HOTLINES**

Visit <http://www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/minnesota-state-veterans-benefits> to learn more about the state's veteran benefits.

## **VETERANS CRISIS LINE, 1-800-273-8255, PRESS 1**

VA is committed to addressing the issue of suicide among our veterans and offers a network of support available to those who have served our country. VA provides a confidential 24/7 Veterans Crisis Line for veterans in crisis and their families. Veterans and their families do not have to be enrolled in VA to use the free, confidential Veterans Crisis Line, soon to be called "It's Your Call". The Veterans Crisis Line has answered more than 390,000 calls and has made more than 13,000 life-saving rescues since its launch.

Know the Signs - Watch for these key suicide warning signs, and provide the Lifeline number to anyone exhibiting them: talking about wanting to hurt or kill oneself; trying to get pills, guns, or other ways to harm oneself; talking or writing about death, dying or suicide; hopelessness; rage, uncontrolled anger, seeking revenge; acting in a reckless or risky way; reeling trapped, like there is no way out; saying or feeling there's no reason for living.

For more information, visit [http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide\\_prevention](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention).

## EVENTS

For a list of veteran and family related events, in communities around Minnesota and the county, visit <http://www.btyr.org/events-a-deals> along with <http://calendar.mdva.state.mn.us/>.

### FRONT IV – VIETNAM

The Dakota County History Center in South St. Paul now has a yearlong display up portraying the lives of combat veterans who fought in the Vietnam War, which was one of the longest and bloodiest wars ever that America was involved with.

For more information, please go to <http://www.co.dakota.mn.us/Departments/DCHS/default.htm>.

### SECOND WORLD WAR II REENACTMENT

**May 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, Saturday and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Dakota City, Farmington**

Education thorough various types of hands-on demonstration by showing the trials and tribulations of the common soldier. Historical reactors will portray living history of the war, with firing demonstrations, military vehicles, a battle, authentic military, home front display, along with a symposium and lectures.

For more information on the activities in Dakota City, visit <http://dakotacity.org>.

### MILITARY FAMILY PICNIC

**May 21<sup>st</sup>, Saturday, 12-3 p.m., Dakota County Fairgrounds at 4008 212 St., Farmington**

Dakota Yellow Ribbon network is teaming up to bring our military families a Spring Picnic. Children's sports camp, free picnic lunch, military and public safety vehicles, climbing wall, and much more. This free picnic is to honor all military, veterans, and their families.

Please register at website <http://farmington2c.org> to ensure that there will be enough food and games for everyone.

Please visit Dakota County's website at [www.co.dakota.mn.us](http://www.co.dakota.mn.us) as it offers citizens additional ways to learn about county government issues. Visitors can also sign up to receive updates via e-mail.

To sign up to receive e-mail updates or to be removed from this service, please go to [www.co.dakota.mn.us/eNews](http://www.co.dakota.mn.us/eNews).